



Interviewee: MORRIS ABRAHAM SCHNEIDER
Date of Birth: May 3, 1910
Date of Interview: November 17, 1991
Interviewer: Paul E. Sigrist, Jr.
Immigrated from Poland in 1920 at age 10
Ellis Island Collection: EI-116

Schneider:

When we got on the Rotterdam, we had a field day. One, I was never on ship before and it was absolutely, I was awed by it. It was overwhelming. All the people and boarding the ship, it was all a brand new experience. We left Rotterdam, we set sail and about a half hour after the ship started my sister got very sea sick. It took us fourteen days to cross the Atlantic and in the entire crossing, she was in steerage, and the only time she came up for a breath of fresh air was just about a half hour before we saw the Statue of Liberty. Now the experience of the ship, being young was an adventure in that particular situation, because we were on the lowest level of the ship. We couldn't go aboard. Some kids were more adventurous. My brother and I, we would sneak aboard, we were always chased. And we saw some people who traveled maybe in first or second class and we looked upon them as royalty, but we were confined primarily to steerage.

Steerage was one huge place. It was the lowest deck. The stench, it was the summer, in August, the humidity, the heat, having no air conditioning, having cooling facilities, it was very hot, compounded by the fact that there must have been anywhere from two to three hundred people in that huge cavernous area. The body smells, the body odors, the lack of sanitation, the lack of any kind of facilities, washing, there was no such thing as washing or bathing. The stench, the vermin, it was rat infested. But, being children, I guess, had its advantages, in this case because we always tried to get out of there. We tried to go, get out of the steerage, get out of the babble of voices, get out of the heat and the stench and get on the main deck. We all were permitted to stay there for a little while but we were constantly chased. But the crossing went for us, for me in particular, went very quickly.